

# THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
  - a. Condemnation on unrighteousness (1:18-32)
  - b. God's principles of judgment (2:1-16)
    - 1) The role of truth in God's judgment (1-5)
    - 2) The role of man's works in God's judgment (6-11)
    - 3) The role of the law in God's judgment (12-16)
  - c. Condemnation of unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)
    - 1) Due to hypocrisy (17-24)
    - 2) Due to trust in circumcision (25-29)
    - 3) Due to unbelief (3:1-8)

### B. Comments on Romans 2:17-3:8

1. The Jews had the advantage of the Mosaic Law and circumcision but a faith revealed by God demands trust and obedience toward God.
2. Verses 17-29 are similar to Romans 1:18-32. In the present verses, Paul reveals that Jews are guilty before God just as he proved that Gentiles are guilty.
3. Tom Constable, *Paul had been speaking of Jews in verses 1–16, but now he identified them by name. The Jews were very self-righteous. Paul explained the basis of their boasting in these verses.*
4. Grant Osborne, *Paul's issue is this: If there is no advantage in being Jewish and God can reject members of his covenant people, then how can one claim that God is always faithful to his covenant promises?*
  - a. This section is a view of God's faithfulness to His words of promising cursing for disobedience as well as blessing for obedience.
  - b. Tom Constable, *The passage affirms the continuing faithfulness of God to His covenant people but clarifies that His faithfulness in no way precludes His judging sinful Jews.*
  - c. Douglas Moo, *In thus allowing the Roman Christians to 'listen in' on this dialogue, Paul warns his mainly Gentile audience that they should not interpret the leveling of distinctions between Jew and Gentile in terms of God's judgment and salvation as the canceling of all the privileges of Israel.*
5. Paul's use of diatribe
  - a. It is forceful attack or criticism.
  - b. C. K. Barrett, *It often becomes easier to follow Paul's arguments if the reader imagines the apostle face to face with a heckler, who makes interjections and receives replies which sometimes are withering and brusque.*
  - c. James Dunn, *In fact we would probably not be far from the mark if we were to conclude that Paul's interlocutor is Paul himself—Paul the unconverted Pharisee, expressing attitudes Paul remembered so well as having been his own!*
6. Spiritual conditions of the nation of Israel, H. D. M. Spence, . . . *at the time of our Lord's ministry, religious formalism was prevalent among the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people. Scribes and Pharisees were too often hypocrites. Religion was too much an affair of ritual and ceremonial observance. Even those who drew near unto God with their lips were deserving of censure, because their hearts were far from him.*

## Romans 2:17-3:8, CONDEMNATION OF UNFAITHFUL JEWS

- A. Jews were condemned because of hypocrisy (17-24)
1. They relied on the law and the advantages it brought them (17-20)
    - a. Paul was speaking of Jews in 2:1-16 but now he identifies them by name (17a), ***But if you call yourself a Jew***
      - 1) Paul used a first class conditional clause (*if*) to identify the group he addresses as Jews.
      - 2) The focus is on nationality and they gloried in being members of God's chosen nation.
        - a) Exodus 19:5-6, *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.*
        - b) Tom Constable, *Paul had been speaking of Jews in verses 1-16, but now he identified them by name. The Jews were very self-righteous. Paul explained the basis of their boasting in these verses.*
    - b. Jews were proud of their special relationship to God with Paul identifying reasons why Jews gloried in their superiority to Gentiles (17b-18), ***and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;***
      - 1) The following list gives strengths of the Jewish people.
        - a) Grant Osborne, *The list is positive, showing the value of the law in Jewish life.*
        - b) Douglas Moo, *Paul here claims for the Jew nothing more than what the Jews of his day were claiming for themselves; every item on the list in vv. 17-20 is paralleled in Jewish literature of the time.*
        - c) Paul emphasized the importance of living out the law when he gave a reprimand in verse 21.
      - 2) The first list
        - a) Jews rely on the Law.
          - 1] They put their confidence in the Law which God gave them.
          - 2] John 5:45, *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.*
          - 3] Micah 3:11, *Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."*
          - 4] Douglas Moo, *So, in Paul's day, Jews thought their reliance on the law would exempt them from judgment.*
          - 5] Grant Osborne, . . . *they depend on the law for their religious identity and claim to follow it. The problem was that they turned it almost into a magic formula for protecting themselves from harm or God's displeasure. . . Their reliance should have been on their walk with God, not on the fact that he had given them the law.*
        - b) They boast in God.
          - 1] They brag about their special relationship to God.
          - 2] Romans 2:23, *You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.*
          - 3] Grant Osborne, . . . *too often among the Jews there was a lack of humility that was not pride in God but pride in their status as God's people.*
        - c) They know God's will.
          - 1] They have an awareness of God's plans based on His revealed truth.
          - 2] Matthew 6:10, *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
          - 3] Psalm 40:8, *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*
        - d) They approve what is excellent.
          - 1] It means *to be worth more than, be superior to.*
          - 2] They approve the things that really matter, the ability to make higher moral choices.
          - 3] Philippians 1:10, *so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,*

- e) They are instructed from the Law.
  - 1] The study of God's law is the reason Jews know God's will and approve what is excellent.
  - 2] Jews were regularly exposed to instruction in the law in the synagogue and at home.
  - 3] The law of Moses was the sole standard for moral decisions.
  
- c. Jews believed their special relationship to God and His Word enabled them to instruct Gentiles (19-20), *and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—*
  - 1) The second list describes how Jewish people were to relate to the Gentiles.
    - a) Grant Osborne, *Think of these as indicating the way God wanted the Jews to be a blessing to the Gentiles, as the Abrahamic covenant commanded (Gen 12:3).*
    - b) Special revelation was given not as a privilege but a responsibility. Jews were to demonstrate the truth of God by living out what they were taught.
  
  - 2) List two
    - a) They believed they were guides to the blind.
      - 1] Jews were certain they could give proper guidance because they had God's special revelation, the law of Moses.
      - 2] Job 29:15, *I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.*
      - 3] Douglas Moo, *It is their uniquely detailed knowledge of God's will, revealed in the law, that renders Jews responsible to teach others.*
  
    - b) They believed they were light to those in darkness.
      - 1] Light was connected to the Law and conversion to Judaism was considered moving from darkness to light.
      - 2] Isaiah 42:6-7, *I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.*
      - 3] Isaiah 49:6b, *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*
      - 4] Acts 26:18, *to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*
  
    - c) They believed they were instructors of the foolish, teachers of children.
      - 1] Gentiles were considered spiritually foolish children who needed to be taught from the Law.
      - 2] Grant Osborne, *The Jewish people looked on themselves as the repository of the knowledge of God and believed that they alone could teach the Gentile "babes" the eternal truths about God.*
  
    - d) All of this is possible because of the Jews' relationship to the Law
      - 1] It is the embodiment of knowledge.
      - 2] It is the embodiment of truth.
  
- 2. They dishonored God by breaking the very law they prized (21-24)
  - a. Paul asked the Jews a general rhetorical question which turned the discussion from privilege to responsibility (21a), *you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?*
    - 1) John Witmer, *Without doubt as Paul enumerated this list of moral and religious distinctives, he got repeated affirmative responses from his Jewish readers. The Jews gloried in their special spiritual position, which contrasted with the Gentiles.*
    - 2) Paul's rhetorical question in verse 21 centers on the greater importance of doing what you believe not teaching others what you don't do.
      - a) God's strong condemnation in Psalm 50:116-21, *But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. "You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.*

- b) Condemnation by Jesus, Matthew 23:2-3, *The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.*
- c) Douglas Moo, *All the privileges, distinctions, and gifts that the Jew may claim are meaningless if they are not responded to with a sincere and consistent obedience. And it is just this obedience that is lacking.*

b. Paul then asked specific rhetorical questions which reveal Jewish hypocrisy concerning prohibitions in the Law (21b-23), ***While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.***

- 1) On stealing and adultery as noted in the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:14-15, *You shall not commit adultery. "You shall not steal.*
- 2) On idolatry
  - a) Paul declared that they detest idols but rob temples.
  - b) It is believed that Paul is referring to instances where Jews who hate idolatry are willing to rob valuables from Gentile temples.
  - c) H. C. G. Moule, . . . *scruple broke down before thievish avarice.*
  - d) The Old Testament speaks of Achan who took things devoted to destruction, Joshua 22:20.
- 3) On breaking the Law
  - a) Malachi 1:6, *A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'*
  - b) Douglas Moo, *It is not boasting in the law that brings honor to God but obedience to it.*

c. Paul condemned Jewish hypocrisy from their own Scripture (24), ***For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."***

- 1) It is thought that Paul combined the statement of Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22 to make the strong condemnation.
  - a) Isaiah 52:5, *Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "and continually all the day my name is despised.*
  - b) Ezekiel 36:22, *Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.*
- 2) John Stott, *In both texts God's name had been mocked because his people had been defeated and enslaved. Could Yahweh not protect his own people? Just so, moral defeat, like military defeat, brings discredit on the name of God.*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The pagan Gentiles had daily contact with the Jews in business and other activities, and they were not fooled by the Jews' devotion to the Law. The very Law that the Jews claimed to obey only indicted them!*

B. Jews were condemned because of trust in external circumcision (2:25-29)

1. They relied on circumcision but separated it from obedience to the law of God (25-27)

a. The value of circumcision is seen in obedience which is internal not external (25), ***For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.***

- 1) Paul demonstrated that Jewish disobedience nullified the effects of the law in Romans 2:12-24, now he declares that their disobedience nullified the value of circumcision.
  - a) *For* indicates that the Jewish listeners believed they were part of the covenant community of God because of circumcision.
  - b) Grant Osborne, *In the intertestamental period the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes banned circumcision in Palestine as part of his attempt to outlaw Judaism. . . As a result it became even more the definitive sign of Jewishness, and by Paul's time it was the final step in making a Gentile a full Jewish convert.*

- c) Tom Constable, *Next to the Mosaic Law the Jews boasted almost equally in their circumcision. Some of them believed that God would not permit any circumcised male to enter perdition. They felt this rite guaranteed their acceptance by God (as some Christians believe baptism guarantees salvation). Paul reminded such people that reality is more important than profession and obedience more vital than testimony.*
- 2) When a person accepts circumcision as a requirement for salvation, that person is obligated to keep the entire Law.
- a) Disobedience turns circumcision into uncircumcision.
    - 1) Galatians 5:3, *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*
    - 2) Galatians 3:10, *For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."*
    - 3) James 2:10, *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*
  - b) Grant Osborne, *Like many today, the Galatians assumed that if they put forth a great deal of effort and were generally faithful, that would be enough to keep them in right standing with God. Paul wants to make certain they recognize the true implications of the kind of salvation they are buying in to.*
- 3) It is good to remember that the purpose of the Law was to condemn not to justify.
- a) The Judaizers were not keeping the entire Law, Acts 15:10, *Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*
  - b) Only Jesus kept the entire Law in order to justify believers through faith in Him alone.
  - c) J. B. Lightfoot, *Circumcision is the seal of the law. He who willingly and deliberately undergoes circumcision, enters upon a compact to fulfil the law. To fulfil it therefore he is bound, and he cannot plead the grace of Christ; for he has entered on another mode of justification.*
- b. An uncircumcised person who keeps the law will be considered circumcised (26), ***So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?***
- 1) In verse 25, Paul declared that circumcision for a Jewish lawbreaker counts for nothing.
  - 2) Now, Paul declares that the opposite is true - an uncircumcised Gentile who keeps the law is in God's sight similar to a circumcised Jew.
    - a) Such a thought would be unthinkable to a Jew who considered himself far superior to Gentiles.
    - b) Note Romans 2:17-21, *But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?*
  - 3) Of course, full obedience to the law is only hypothetical since only One was able to fully keep the law.
- c. Such a person condemns those who have the truth but break it (27), ***Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.***
- 1) *the written code*
    - a) It is literally *the letter*.
    - b) Paul is referring to the Mosaic Law which they had written down.
  - 2) *will condemn you*
    - a) It was common for a Jew to consider himself in judgment over Gentiles but here, Paul declares that a righteous Gentile's behavior stands in judgment against disobedient Jews.
    - b) Matthew 12:41-42, *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*

- 3) On the importance of obedience.
  - a) Tom Constable, *Circumcision was a label and implied that the Jew was obedient to God. However if he was not completely obedient the label was not only worthless but deceptive. The contents of the can are more important than the label. Similarly if a Gentile was completely obedient to God the absence of the label of circumcision was not of major consequence. The Jews had put more emphasis on the presence of the label than on the contents of the can.*
  - b) Douglas Moo, . . . *it is not at the level of understanding but at the level of doing that the problem lies.*
  
2. The true Jew is not the one who trusts in an external rite but the one transformed inwardly by the Spirit (28-29)
  - a. Jewishness can't be confirmed by outward appearance (28), ***For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.***
    - 1) Paul defines what true circumcision is not - it is not an external act but it is something more.
    - 2) Such things as wearing phylacteries, paying tithes or being circumcised shows that a person identifies with Judaism but it does not make a person a Jew.
  
  - b. Jewishness is a matter of the heart transformed by God the Spirit and affirmed by God the Father (29), ***But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.***
    - 1) Paul defined true circumcision is - an internal act on the heart not on the flesh.
      - a) Tom Constable, *Paul was saying the person who really praises God is not one who merely wears the label of circumcision but one whose obedience to God is genuine.*
      - b) It is empowered by the Holy Spirit not by knowledge alone.
        - 1) Deuteronomy 30:6, *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*
        - 2) Jeremiah 4:4, *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.*
        - 3) Jeremiah 9:25-26, *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.*
    - 2) True circumcision brings praise from God.
      - a) External circumcision can be seen by others.
      - b) True circumcision can be seen only by God.
      - c) Tom Constable, *The truly obedient person will not only praise God, but God will also praise him. He will not just receive the praise of men for his professed obedience to God. . . Really a god-fearing Gentile was more pleasing to God than a disobedient Jew because God delights in obedience.*
    - 3) John Stott on true circumcision, *In his redefinition of what it means to be a Jew, an authentic member of God's covenant people, then, Paul draws a fourfold contrast.*
      - a) *First, the essence of being a true Jew (who may indeed be ethnically a Gentile) is not something outward and visible, but inward and invisible.*
      - b) *For the true circumcision is, secondly, in the heart, not the flesh.*
      - c) *Thirdly, it is effected by the Spirit, not the law,*
      - d) *and fourthly, it wins the approval of God rather than human beings. Human beings are comfortable with what is outward, visible, material and superficial. What matters to God is a deep, inward, secret work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.*
    - 4) The relationship of Jewishness to Christianity
      - a) Paul was not moving toward identifying Christians as true Jews.
      - b) He had been showing that the true movement of God is through a changed heart not through external show.
      - c) This entire section has been a demonstration that Jews like all human beings will be individually judged by a holy, righteous God.

- d) Grant Osborne, *Two points must be made about Paul's list in verses 17–20 of the positive ways the Jews' privilege and their responsibility related to the Gentiles. First, these privileges and responsibilities reflected God's intentions for Israel. This was how they could fulfill the Abrahamic covenant and God's intention in choosing them as his covenant people. But that demanded both faithfulness in obeying his covenant and laws and a willingness to be a source of blessing to the Gentiles. The Jews failed in both. Second, these privileges and responsibilities also apply to our relationships as Christians to unbelievers. This demands humility and a desire to be used of God as we take these truths to the world. Would Paul's assessment of us be any better than that of his own people? We must continually examine ourselves in terms of our witness and service to the lost.*

C. Jews were condemned because of unbelief as seen in four rhetorical questions (3:1-8)

1. What is the advantage of being a Jew who is circumcised? (1-2), ***Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.***

- a. Paul's first question: If Jews and Gentiles are both guilty before God, what is the advantage of being a circumcised Jew? Did Paul's teaching undermine God's covenant?

- b. He responded by saying there is advantage in being a Jew.

1) *Much in every way*

- a) Paul is emphasizing that Jews have advantage as he prepares to explain what they are but it is important to note that these advantages have responsibilities attached.
- b) Douglas Moo, *Paul's intention there was not to deny that the Jews have privileges that the Gentiles do not have, but to contest the notion that these privileges give to the Jew an advantage in the judgment.*
- c) John Stott, *It has much value in every way, but a different kind of value, that is, responsibility rather than security.*
- d) William Barclay, *To the end of the day, he believed the Jews to be in a special position in relation to God. That, in fact, is what they believed themselves. The difference was that Paul believed that their special position was one of special responsibility; the Jews believed it to be one of special privilege.*

2) They were entrusted with *the oracles of God.*

- a) *To begin with* implies that this is one of more privileges.

- b) *Oracles of God* refer to God's special revelation, the very words of God preserved by the nation of Israel.

1] Deuteronomy 4:8, *And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?*

2] Acts 7:38, *This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.*

3] Grant Osborne, *When we read Scripture, we should picture God actually speaking these things to us directly! . . . If we truly believe the Bible is the Word of God, how can we neglect it in our lives?*

- c) Israel was *entrusted* with the responsibility to guard and proclaim the Mosaic Law and the Old Testament as a whole.

1] This responsibility had been given to no other nation.

2] Psalm 147:19-20, *He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!*

2. Will God forsake His promises to the nation because some were unfaithful? (3-4), ***What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."***

- a. Paul's second question: Will Jewish unbelief cancel God's faithfulness to bless the nation? If God's people are unfaithful, does that mean God is unfaithful?

- b. He responded by declaring Jewish unbelief proves God's faithfulness is unconditional.

1) Paul strongly denied man's actions negate His promises, *By no means!* or *May it never be!*

- a) It was frequently used by Paul and it literally means, *No way!*

b) Romans 6:1-2, *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

c) Romans 11:11, *So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*

- 2) The standard for faithfulness is God who is not controlled by man's nature but His own.
  - a) Hebrews 10:23, *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*
  - b) 2 Timothy 2:13, *if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.*
- c. Paul was looking back to the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament covenants.
  - 1) Only Caleb and Joshua were the only adults who proved faithful of the generation who received the law at Sinai.
  - 2) Yet, God brought the whole nation into Canaan as He promised with the unbelieving generation dying in the wilderness.
- d. He used David as an illustration of God's faithfulness.
  - 1) The quote is from Psalm 51:4, *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.*
  - 2) David was deeply flawed but was a man after God's own heart.
  - 3) There were consequences for David's actions which did not negate God's faithfulness to him.
3. Will God overlook the Jews' unrighteousness because it clearly contrasts God's faithfulness? (5-6), ***But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?***
  - a. Paul's third question: Won't God deal more graciously with the Jews because their failings clearly differentiate God's righteousness from Jewish unrighteousness?
    - 1) John Stott describes this mind set, . . . *our unrighteousness benefits God, because it displays his character all the more brightly. This being so, what shall we say? Shall we conclude that God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? God's wrath is certainly on the immoral Gentiles (1:18) and will fall on the critical moralizers (2:5); but will he really bring it on his own people, the Jews? Would it not be unfair of him to punish them for something which is to his advantage?*
    - 2) *I speak in human terms*
      - a) Paul wants the readers to know that this was said for the sake of argument.
      - b) He did not believe that God could be unfaithful to His nature and His word.
      - c) David Daube, *It constitutes an apology for a statement which, but for the apology, would be too bold, almost blasphemous.*
      - d) Paul again responds to such a idea by saying, *By no means!*
  - b. Paul declared that if this third question is true, how could God judge the world?
    - 1) Tom Constable, *Paul's answer was this. God will not show favoritism to the Jews even though by their unfaithfulness they glorify the faithfulness of God. If He did so, He would be partial and not qualified to sit in judgment on humankind.*
    - 2) John Stott, *To impugn God's justice is to undercut his competence to judge and so to show up the absurdity of the original question.*
      - a) Romans 2:5, *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*
      - b) Romans 2:11, *For God shows no partiality.*
    - 3) God's justice demands personal responsibility.
      - a) Genesis 18:25, *Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"*
      - b) Job 8:3, *Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right?*
      - c) Warren Wiersbe, *We do not do evil that good may come of it. God judges the world righteously.*
    - 4) God will judge mankind not based on privilege but accountability to Jesus Christ, Romans 2:16, *on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

4. Will God punish me for lying when it shows God to be the only One who is perfectly truthful? (7-8), *But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.*
- a. Paul's fourth question: If my lying reveals God as the only one who is perfectly truthful, why should God punish those who lie?
  - b. This question is a specific illustration of Paul's response to his third question using lying as an unrighteous behavior that glorifies God's truthfulness.
    - 1) Romans 6:1, *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*
    - 2) Charles Hodge, *According to this reasoning, says Paul, the worse we are, the better: for the more wicked we are, the more conspicuous will be the mercy of God in our pardon.*
    - 3) Tom Constable, *If circumcision is of secondary importance compared to perfect obedience to God, is not sinning of secondary importance to glorifying God?*
    - 4) The question is raised today by promoting the concept that the end justifies the means, as noted by Paul, *And why not do evil that good may come?*
  - c. Paul strongly refuted the concept of magnifying God through sinful behavior.
    - 1) He stated that those who say Paul taught such a concept was slander.
    - 2) It was just in condemning those who promoted such behavior or accused Paul of promoting it.
    - 3) John Stott, *For no good results can justify the encouragement of evil. Evil never promotes the glory of God.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. It is easy to mistake responsibility for privilege.
- B. The wise person does not trust in what he knows but in what he obeys.
- C. God is not pleased by knowledge but by obedience.
- D. True external circumcision is that which represents circumcision of the heart.
- E. Man judges on appearance but God judges the heart.
- F. Jews were condemned because of unbelief.
- G. John Stott, *He (Paul) saw that the character of God was at stake. So he reaffirmed God's covenant as having abiding value, God's faithfulness to his promises, God's justice as judge, and God's true glory which is promoted only by good, never by evil.*
- H. Douglas Moo, . . . *God's faithfulness is ultimately not to Israel but to his own person and promises. God is therefore "righteous" when he punishes his people for their sin as well as when he rewards them for obedience. But this does not mean, Paul concludes, that we should excuse sin simply because it always magnifies God's righteousness. Such an attitude brings God's own name into disrepute.*